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Seventeenth progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire

I. Introduction

1. By its resolution 1795 (2008) of 15 January 2008, the Security Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) until 30 July 2008, and requested me to provide information on progress achieved in implementing the key tasks of the peace process as set out in the Ouagadougou Agreement and its supplementary agreements. The present report provides an update on major developments in Côte d'Ivoire since my report of 15 April 2008 (S/2008/250).

II. Political developments

2. The overall political climate in Côte d'Ivoire remained calm during the reporting period, with the implementation of the Ouagadougou Agreement and its supplementary agreements continuing to dominate political developments. As indicated in section IV of the present report, the parties made further significant progress by completing the mobile courts operation for the identification of the population; finalizing the modus operandi for the issuance of national identity cards and the voter registration process; launching the cantonment of Forces nouvelles combatants; beginning to transfer revenue collection from the Forces nouvelles to the State in the northern part of the country; and, moving forward the preparations for national elections. However, the implementation of other key aspects of the Ouagadougou Agreement, notably the disarmament and dismantling of the militia and the reunification of the armed forces, remained stalled. Funding constraints also contributed to continued delays in the reintegration of former combatants, the launch of the national civic programme and the development of State institutions' capacity in the northern part of the country.

3. On 14 April, President Laurent Gbagbo issued a decree setting 30 November 2008 as the date of the first round of presidential elections, as recommended by the Independent Electoral Commission and agreed to by all Ivorian political parties and civil society. With the lifting of the zone of confidence that had divided the country, and the sustained improvement of the political and security climate in the country, political party leaders and the general population are now able to move freely throughout the country. During the reporting period significant efforts were made to

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reinvigorate political party structures and increase outreach activities, including rallies by political parties throughout Côte d'Ivoire, in preparation for the November elections.

4. The Ivorian political parties and civil society actively discussed the implementation of key aspects of the Ouagadougou Agreement and supplementary agreements, in particular the disarmament of combatants and militias; the restoration of effective State administration with the capacity to collect revenue in the northern part of the country; and, the identification of the population. The ruling Front populaire ivoirien political party strongly advocated for the disarmament of combatants and the transfer of administrative authority to the préfets, sous-préfets and customs officers redeployed in the north. As for the Rassemblement des houphouétistes pour la démocratie et la paix opposition alliance, it continued to dispatch teams throughout the country to sensitize the population on the identification process and the upcoming registration of voters. Also during the reporting period, the President of the Economic and Social Council, Dona Fologo, previously a prominent member of former President Henri Konan Bédié's Parti démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire, formed a new political party, the Rassemblement pour la paix, le progrès et le partage, and announced his support for President Gbagbo in the upcoming presidential election. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Guillaume Soro continued to hold consultations with the various segments of the Ivorian population to keep them apprised of progress in and challenges facing the peace process.

5. During my visit to Côte d'Ivoire on 23 and 24 April, I welcomed the consensus reached by the Ivorian parties on the election date and encouraged them to keep the implementation of the Ouagadougou agreements on track. I congratulated President Gbagbo and Prime Minister Soro on the progress achieved so far and emphasized the need to expeditiously address the financial and technical challenges that are impeding progress in some key areas.

6. I also witnessed, on 24 April, the signing of an agreement between the Ivorian Government and international donors, under which the latter committed some $43 million to support the electoral process. I was also encouraged by the code of good conduct during the electoral period, which was signed by 37 political parties and groupings in my presence. Before visiting Côte d'Ivoire, I travelled to Ouagadougou, where I exchanged views with the Facilitator of the Ivorian peace process, Burkina Faso President Blaise Compaoré, on how best the United Nations could continue to support and accompany the Ivorian peace process.

III. Security situation

7. The overall security situation in Côte d'Ivoire remained stable. However, recurrent protests by cantoned Forces nouvelles combatants over non-payment of their allowances underscored the risk of possible setbacks if adequate resources are not provided to support key aspects of the peace process. On 16 June, more than 200 demobilized Forces nouvelles combatants blocked the main road in Bouaké and discharged their weapons into the air to protest the delay in the payment of their monthly allowances. Forces nouvelles authorities intervened to restore order, while promising the protestors that their grievances would be addressed. UNOCI and Licorne forces deployed to the area to assist in bringing the situation under control.

The Forces nouvelles military leadership also requested UNOCI support to defuse the situation during a second demonstration of demobilized combatants in Bouaké on 18 June that resulted in damages to public and private properties.

8. In mid-May, tensions in Séguéla escalated following the dismissal of Major Zakaria Koné, the Forces nouvelles zone commander of the area, who had opposed the plan to demobilize his combatants, with Forces nouvelles elements loyal to Major Koné discharging their weapons on 18 and 19 May. At the request of the Forces nouvelles leadership, UNOCI increased its military presence in the town. Calm returned to the area following a reconciliation ceremony held on 26 May, during which some 300 Forces nouvelles combatants pledged allegiance to Major Issiaka Ouattara, the newly appointed zone commander who is also the Forces nouvelles deputy chief of staff.

9. The situation in Séguéla and Vavoua, also within Major Ouattara's area of responsibility, deteriorated further in late June, with Forces nouvelles combatants loyal to the deposed zone commander staging violent demonstrations in both cities on 28 June to protest against the ongoing cantonment operation. At least two soldiers from the opposing sides of the Forces nouvelles were killed and several wounded during the exchange of fire that ensued between the factions. In Séguéla, the demonstrators attacked Major Ouattara's residence, while those in Vavoua took hostage a Forces nouvelles official and two soldiers. The hostages were released on 30 June following negotiations with the Forces nouvelles Chief of Staff, General Soumaïla Bakayoko. At the request of the Forces nouvelles, UNOCI and Licorne troops intensified the patrolling of both towns and provided protection for the main Forces nouvelles camp in Séguéla.

10. Meanwhile, localized criminality continued to be a growing concern in the area of the country under the control of the Forces nouvelles. On 24 April, 200 students in Bouaké held a peaceful demonstration to protest against mounting insecurity in the city. On 14 May, a regular UNOCI patrol along the Korhogo-Mbengue highway discovered the bodies of two Forces nouvelles soldiers, one of whom was later identified as the deputy zone commander of Katiola, Ouattara Ali.

11. Notwithstanding a decrease in the number of roadside robberies and armed attacks, the western part of the country also remained unstable. On 5 May in Tai, near Guiglo, Young Patriots prohibited the movement of an Independent Electoral Commission official in protest against the inclusion of Forces nouvelles members in the local electoral commission, and fired into the air with AK-47 rifles. UNOCI intervened to calm the situation and ensure safe passage of the civilian personnel of the Mission. Following discussions with local law enforcement officials, the roadblock was removed. Throughout the country, a rise in incidents of rape was noted during the period under review.

IV. Status of implementation of the Ouagadougou Agreement

12. On 9 May, the Facilitator of the Ivorian peace process convened the third meeting of the permanent consultative framework of the Ouagadougou Agreement, which comprises the main Ivorian political leaders (President Gbagbo, Prime Minister Soro, Mr. Bédié and Mr. Ouattara). The final communiqué called for a rapid launch of the identification operation and the reconstitution of civil registers, as well as the immediate dismantling of the militias and the commencement of the

civic service. Upon a request from Mr. Ouattara, leader of the Rassemblement des républicains, the meeting decided that the mobile court operations would continue beyond the 15 May closure date where needed and within an agreed timeline.

13. Notwithstanding the progress noted during the period under review with respect to implementing the peace process, significant challenges persisted that threatened to undermine the gains already made, in particular the lack of adequate funding for key processes such as the elections and disarmament, and also the imperative of providing adequate security guarantees during the electoral process in view of the violent demonstrations described above in paragraphs 7 to 9. Prime Minister Soro stressed the need for increased international support in meeting these challenges during a meeting he convened in Bouaké on 1 July with the political and military leadership of UNOCI, the Special Representative of the Facilitator, the Licorne force commander and the Ambassador of France to Côte d'Ivoire.

A. Establishment of the integrated command centre

14. The integrated command centre responsible for implementing the military and security aspects of the Ouagadougou Agreement continued to build its capacity with support from UNOCI and the Licorne force. Its total authorized strength is 587 Government and Forces nouvelles personnel, comprising 197 elements based at the headquarters in Yamoussoukro and 390 personnel deployed in the former zone of confidence as part of the mixed police units and supporting elements. Since my last report, the integrated command centre has increased its strength from 564 to 587 personnel. Even though the centre's communication capabilities have improved, its operational effectiveness continues to be hampered by limited financial, logistical, planning and operational capabilities. Lack of adequate funding has resulted in its personnel not receiving food and fuel allowances for the past five months, while its Forces nouvelles personnel have not received their monthly salaries since they were deployed.

15. UNOCI and Licorne continue to maintain an integrated implementation cell within the integrated command centre, comprised of military, police and civilian personnel. Three UNOCI military liaison officers and a UNOCI police liaison team are based at the centre. On 28 April, a UNOCI disarmament, demobilization and reintegration operations centre was established at the integrated command centre to strengthen its planning and coordination capacities. Meanwhile, the Mission continued to provide logistical support to the command centre, including transport assistance, communications support and office equipment.

B. Deployment of mixed units and gradual lifting of the green line

16. In keeping with the provisions of the Ouagadougou Agreement, 16 out of the 17 observation posts established by UNOCI along the green line that replaced the zone of confidence have been removed. The remaining post at Beou Zagna, in the western part of the country, is scheduled to be dismantled on 30 July. The progressive lifting of the green line was based on threat assessments, consultations with national partners and Licorne, and the overall security situation. Meanwhile, the mixed police units continued to patrol the former zone of confidence, though, as

indicated in my previous reports, their operations have been hampered by a lack of adequate equipment and salaries.

C. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration

17. On 18 April, during the regular meeting of the Chiefs of Staff of the Defence and Security Forces of Côte d'Ivoire and the Forces nouvelles with the force commanders of UNOCI and the Licorne force, the Forces nouvelles Commander presented the group's cantonment plan. Under the plan, 36,000 Forces nouvelles elements would be cantoned over a five-month period at sites in Bouaké, Korhogo, Man, Odienné, Ferkessédougou and Kani. The cantonment process was relaunched on 2 May, with the cantonment of 1,000 soldiers in Bouaké. As at 1 July, 6,285 Forces nouvelles elements have been cantoned, out of which 3,980 chose to be demobilized and 1,305 volunteered to join the new national armed forces. Of the Forces nouvelles elements cantoned, 279 women combatants have participated in the operation, out of which one volunteered to join the new armed forces and 278 have decided to be demobilized. The cantoned combatants also included 366 foreign elements from Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, the Niger, Nigeria and Togo. While foreign combatants participating in the cantonment operation have access to the monthly allowance, they are eligible only for demobilization, and the Ministry of Defence has proposed that they eventually be repatriated to their countries of origin. To date, only 86 weapons, of which 10 are serviceable, have been collected and stored under the custody of the Forces nouvelles.

18. Although the Ouagadougou Agreement provides for the disarmament process to take place under the supervision of the impartial forces, the leadership of the Defence and Security Forces of Côte d'Ivoire and of the Forces nouvelles have not yet accepted a memorandum of understanding regarding the responsibility of the impartial forces to supervise storage of the weapons collected during the cantonment process. Meanwhile, UNOCI continued to provide logistical and technical assistance to the cantonment process, including the refurbishment of sites at Kani and Ferkessédougou, to increase their capacity to 500 combatants each.

19. In June, the Ministry of Defence established a disarmament monitoring committee, which includes representatives of the international community, to address the obstacles facing the ongoing cantonment process, such as the absence of reintegration programmes for foreign combatants and the inability of the Government to pay the agreed $214 monthly allowance to each cantoned combatant for a period of three months. Meanwhile, the national programme for reinsertion and community rehabilitation continues to face considerable financial and logistical challenges that impede its capacity to absorb an expected caseload of 6,000 ex-combatants. To date, only 450 combatants have been absorbed into the programme. The World Bank indicated to the Forces nouvelles Chief of Staff that its $40-million reinsertion and community rehabilitation programme, scheduled to be launched in August, will prioritize demobilized combatants.

20. In April, the Government appointed a director for the planned national civic service programme. In the first stage of its operations, the national civic service programme is expected to focus on former combatants and youth at risk, and will provide three months of training on civic responsibility and six months of vocational

training. The programme is expected to cost $80 million in 2008, of which the Government has budgeted $24 million. International donors, who are expected by the Ivorian Government to meet the $56 million shortfall, have not yet pledged funds for the programme.

D. Disarmament and dismantling of militias

21. No progress has been made with respect to the disarmament and dismantling of militias. Under the third supplementary agreement to the Ouagadougou Agreement, this programme was to begin by 22 December 2007. However, militia leaders have rejected the Government proposal that the 1,019 armed militias remaining in the west should be absorbed by the national civic service programme. They continue to demand payment of the safety net package received by the first batch of militias disarmed in Guiglo in July 2006.

E. Unification of the defence and security forces

22. The unification of the national armed forces, one of the key tasks assigned to the integrated command centre, remained stalled during the period under review. The main stumbling block is the continued disagreement between the signatories of the Ouagadougou Agreement on the ranks and numbers of the Forces nouvelles personnel to be integrated into the new national armed forces. It is now expected that this issue will be addressed after the elections in November.

F. Restoration of State administration throughout the territory

23. During the period under review, the Forces nouvelles made progress in transferring administrative authority to redeployed Government officials. On 20 May, under the auspices of two Forces nouvelles Government ministers, the mayors of Séguéla, Kani and Massala assumed control of their cities. Similar ceremonies took place in Bouaké and five other towns in the Vallée du Bandama Region.

24. No progress was made, however, with regard to the coordinated redeployment of law enforcement, justice and corrections personnel to the north. The Ministry of Justice has developed a plan for the redeployment of the judiciary and the penitentiary, in cooperation with the national commission, for the redeployment of State administration, which requires further coordination with the redeployment plans of the police.

25. On 12 May, the first rehabilitated customs post was inaugurated by the Minister of Economy and Finance at Ouangolodougou. The post is evenly manned by personnel from the Forces nouvelles and Government customs agents, although the former maintain control. While the Forces nouvelles hierarchy is committed to the redeployment of Government customs authorities and has stressed the need for additional sensitization of the local population, some Forces nouvelles customs agents working in the area have indicated their wish to be integrated into the Government customs service after completing the disarmament process.

G. Identification of the population and voter registration

26. Since my last report, significant progress has been made towards the identification of the population. The fourth generation of mobile court operations, which began on 25 September 2007, came to an official end on 15 May, after issuing 627,923 declaratory judgements in lieu of birth certificates, including 533,789 documents to Ivorian nationals, which will serve as valid identity papers for registration on the voters' roll. Subsequent to the recommendation from the permanent consultative framework meeting of 9 May, the Minister of Justice announced, on 16 May, that ad hoc mobile courts would be redeployed for two weeks to areas that were not adequately covered prior to 15 May.

27. The operation to reconstitute the civil registers and restore birth, marriage and death records that were lost or destroyed during the crisis was officially launched on 16 May by the Minister of Justice and Human Rights, and is expected to be completed within four months. The operation is projected to cost $16.5 million, of which the European Union has pledged to contribute $12 million. The United Nations Office of Project Services will provide technical assistance.

28. The decree on the modus operandi for the production and issuance of national identification cards and the registration of voters was promulgated on 19 June. The decree clarifies the modalities of cooperation between the two operators, the French firm SAGEM and the National Institute of Statistics, which are expected to jointly conduct the processes of identification and voter registration under the authority of the Independent Electoral Commission. On 27 May, the Ivorian Government made a first payment to SAGEM in the amount of $47 million, which represents 35 per cent of the total negotiated cost of $165 million.

H. Electoral process

29. Following the confirmation of the 30 November 2008 date for the presidential election, the Independent Electoral Commission announced an electoral timetable that conforms to the Ivorian Constitution and the revised electoral code. The provisional electoral list is scheduled to be published on 31 August; the definitive list, to be used for both the presidential and legislative elections, will be published on 15 November. Following the first round of the presidential election, the Independent Electoral Commission will submit the polling report to the Constitutional Council within three days. The Constitutional Council has up to seven days to decide and issue a statement on the results of the elections. If no presidential candidate wins decisively, a second round of elections should take place within 15 days of the proclamation of the results. Legislative elections will take place 45 days after the announcement of the results of the presidential election.

30. Local electoral commissions, which play a critical role in supervising the identification process and in organizing the elections, are being installed throughout the country. As of 1 July, 369 out of the 415 local commissions had been established. The local electoral commissions include representatives of all signatories of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement.

31. The planning for the elections, the mapping of polling stations, the procurement of electoral materials and the registration of candidates are also ongoing. UNOCI is assisting the Independent Electoral Commission with a review

of the 11,000 polling sites that were used during the 2000 elections, and is using the geographic information system technology of the Mission in the planning process. The Mission intends to provide air transportation to partners involved in electoral operations, and will assist the National Commission for the Supervision of Identification to establish its regional offices. UNOCI will require additional air, maritime and surface transport assets, engineering and communications capabilities and additional personnel to support the electoral process.

32. The Independent Electoral Commission is facing a shortfall of approximately $18.5 million for its operations in 2008. Its total budget is estimated at $86.5 million, out of which the Ivorian Government will provide $35.5 million. International partners have pledged $32.5 million, of which $10 million will come from the United Nations Development Programme-administered basket fund for elections.

33. In my previous report I outlined the five-criteria framework that was defined by my Special Representative and accepted by all parties for certifying all key stages of the electoral process. The UNOCI certification support cell has developed a modus operandi for the certification process. Field reports, together with formal and informal consultations with the Facilitator of the Ivorian peace process and national and international partners, will serve as the basis for the certification of the electoral process.

I. Financial support for the implementation of the Ouagadougou Agreement

34. Efforts to secure adequate funding for the peace process accelerated during the period under review, with the Prime Minister travelling to the Middle East from 28 April to 7 May, in an effort to mobilize new sources of funding. The Islamic Development Bank has pledged $31 million in support of the Government post-conflict recovery programme. My Special Representative, together with the international consultative organ and international donors, held a press conference on 7 May in Abidjan, during which they announced that the international partners of Côte d'Ivoire had pledged some $272 million in support of Government post-conflict recovery programmes, including the electoral process.

35. On 30 April, the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund approved an extension of the emergency project to support the Ivorian direct dialogue. The contribution to the efforts of the Facilitator, including sustaining the office of his Special Representative in Abidjan, was increased from $700,000 to $1 million. On 13 June, I declared Côte d'Ivoire eligible to receive funds under the second window of the Peacebuilding Fund. A country level analysis of critical gaps in the peacebuilding effort was conducted to prepare a Peacebuilding Fund priority plan that will form the basis for determining the funding envelope. In addition to supporting the Facilitation team, resources could become available to support immediate reinsertion projects for ex-combatants, ex-militias and youth-at-risk, in the context of the 1,000 microprojects initiative launched by my Special Representative. Furthermore, and in addition to its regular budget, UNOCI has secured an additional $1 million from the Republic of Korea and Switzerland, which will support a total of 100 quick-impact projects aimed at strengthening social cohesion and confidence-building in the country.

V. Deployment of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire

A. Military component

36. As at 1 July, the military strength of UNOCI stood at 8,024 personnel, comprising 7,740 troops, 195 military observers and 89 staff officers, against the authorized strength of 8,115. Of the Mission's military personnel 77 are women. Of the Mission's 11 battalions, five are deployed in the western part of the country, four in the east and two in Abidjan. One aviation unit, three engineering companies, one transport company and one special force company are providing enabling capacity and operational reserve to the force. The Sous-Groupement de sécurité, comprising 279 personnel, continues to provide close protection to members of the Government and other political leaders, in keeping with the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement and relevant Security Council resolutions. The Licorne force that provides essential support to the Mission continued to patrol the entire area of operation and maintained its quick reaction capability.

37. The redeployment of UNOCI military force from the former zone of confidence continued during the period under review. As part of the redeployment process, the Mission is consolidating its camps from 44 to 24 and increasing force mobility to provide security for the electoral and other key processes under the Ouagadougou Agreement, in line with its revised concept of operations. To date, 20 out of the planned 24 camps have been dismantled. A new deployment location has been established in Dabakala in the north, while efforts are continuing to establish three new camps in the areas of Divo and Issia in the west and Adzopé in the south, where there has been no UNOCI presence. Furthermore, UNOCI intensified its joint border patrols with the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) to prevent cross-border movement of irregular armed groups and weapons.

B. Police component

38. As at 1 July, UNOCI police strength stood at 1,152 personnel, against the authorized ceiling of 1,200, including 402 officers and 750 personnel in formed police units. There are 20 female officers in the UNOCI police component.

39. The police component is focusing on supporting, mentoring and advising the Ivorian national police and the mixed police units that maintain law and order in the former zone of confidence. UNOCI police personnel conduct joint patrols and investigations with the Ivorian national police and gendarmes in order to help enhance the professional capacity of these forces. UNOCI police also conduct regular training courses on human rights and international standards of policing, provide support to the integrated command centre, and have initiated bilateral projects on crowd control and forensics between national law enforcement agencies and Germany, Turkey and the European Union. In case it becomes necessary to reinforce its crowd control capacity during the elections, UNOCI intends to consult with UNMIL, the Ivorian Government and troop contributors on the possibility of receiving reinforcements from formed police units deployed in UNMIL, within the framework of Security Council resolution 1609 (2005).

VI. Human rights and the rule of law

A. Human rights situation

40. The overall human rights situation in Côte d'Ivoire has continued to show signs of sustained improvement, a trend that was noted with satisfaction by the Deputy United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Kyung-wha Kang, during her visit to Côte d'Ivoire from 25 to 27 May. At the same time, cases of impunity for human rights violations continued to be reported during the period under review. UNOCI documented and investigated reports of human rights violations inflicted on civilians, including intimidation, arbitrary arrest and detention, extrajudicial killing, rape committed by armed highway robbers in the Bangolo region and racketeering at checkpoints in both the Government- and Forces nouvelles-controlled parts of the country.

41. The persistent impunity enjoyed by perpetrators of sexual violence including rape, female genital mutilation and forced marriage committed against women and girls is of particular concern. During the reporting period, UNOCI documented more than 52 cases of rape. Of these reported cases, little action to hold the perpetrators accountable has been taken by the national authorities to date. There were also inter-community tensions that led to targeted killings and the destruction of property in the Odienné, San Pedro and Duékoué areas.

42. The Mission, with support from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, continued to work closely with national partners to build the capacity of civil society to promote and protect human rights, raise awareness and empower citizens to claim their rights. Meanwhile, in an encouraging development that followed the release of a Human Rights Watch report accusing members of the Student Federation of Côte d'Ivoire, the student union, of violence and intimidation in support of the ruling Front populaire ivoirien, President Gbagbo met with the union's new leadership on 19 May and called on them to refrain from acts of violence.

B. Child protection

43. UNOCI and the United Nations country team continued to monitor violations committed against children, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), and worked towards mainstreaming concerns related to children in the Mission programmes, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 1261 (1999) and 1460 (2003). Since the beginning of 2008, 3,275 Mission personnel have received child protection training. UNOCI also provided training and sensitization programmes for members of local communities, to build awareness of child rights and capacity for child protection. These programmes have so far reached 3,790 national law enforcement officers, teachers, members of non-governmental organizations and civil society representatives.

44. Meanwhile, the Mission maintained its dialogue with the Forces nouvelles and pro-Government militia following my decision to remove them from the list of parties to armed conflict that recruit or use child soldiers. On 17 April, the militia leaders in the west issued a communiqué welcoming that decision and expressing appreciation for the United Nations assistance to developing and successfully

implementing their action plan. They further expressed their determination to prevent the future use of child soldiers in the areas of the country under their influence.

C. Judicial and corrections systems

45. In April, the European Union handed over to the Minister of Justice and Human Rights six court buildings it had rehabilitated in Bouaké, Katiola, Séguéla, Man, Touba and Danané in support of the restoration of the judicial system in the north of the country. Rehabilitation works at the remaining court buildings in the Forces nouvelles-controlled part of the country also began during the period under review. With technical assistance from UNOCI and funding provided by the German Development Agency, the Government is taking steps to establish a national institute for judicial training, a specialist graduate school for judicial and penitentiary personnel.

46. With respect to corrections institutions, Germany has committed to financing the rehabilitation of nine prisons in the north. Meanwhile, on 16 April, approximately 150 inmates escaped from the Bouaké prison after reportedly bribing a prison guard. Only nine of the escaped prisoners have since been captured.

VII. Humanitarian situation

47. The spontaneous return of displaced persons continued during the period under review. Since the signing of the Ouagadougou Agreement and as a result of strengthened coordination between authorities and humanitarian actors in the western area of Côte d'Ivoire, 61,432 internally displaced persons have returned to their original homes. Humanitarian assistance and protection will continue to be provided to these populations.

48. To address tensions between the host community in Bloléquin and returning internally displaced persons, the Minister of National Reconciliation and the Minister of Solidarity and War Victims, together with the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator in Côte d'Ivoire, organized a workshop on 23 May to develop proposals to facilitate the return and reintegration of displaced persons into their communities of origin. Participants recommended that the Government rehabilitate the existing social infrastructure and provide income-generating opportunities for youth. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Public Health and Hygiene launched on 17 May a week-long initiative in Korhogo to expand nutritional programmes in the north of the country, where some 80,000 children suffer from malnutrition.

VIII. Economic recovery

49. In May, the Ivorian Government cleared arrears owed to the World Bank, allowing the Bank to consider relaunching rural development, transport, education and distance learning programmes that had been suspended since 2004. The World Bank approved three additional projects on 12 June, including an emergency urban reconstruction grant for Abidjan and Bouaké ($94 million), an HIV/AIDS project

($20 million) and a governance and institution-building project ($12 million). Meanwhile, a preliminary version of the 2009-2013 United Nations Development Assistance Framework was validated by national and local partners. Similarly, the poverty reduction strategy, covering the same period, is being finalized following nationwide consultations held under the leadership of the Ministry of State, Planning and Development.

IX. Media monitoring and public information

50. UNOCI continued to implement its communications strategy in support of the peace process and the accompanying role of the Mission. The Mission also worked to expand the participation of civil society in promoting the peace process, organizing workshops and seminars with the Ivorian media, women, traditional chiefs and civil society groups. The UNOCI peace caravan, aimed at involving schoolchildren in peace initiatives within their communities, visited several towns within the country, in particular in the west. Meanwhile, ONUCI FM continued to expand its coverage area with the installation of a transmitter in Dabakala.

51. The Mission also continued its efforts to promote a positive media environment and to monitor the activities of the national print and broadcast media. In that regard, UNOCI provided technical and financial support for a national forum organized from 27 to 30 May by the Government and media professionals that focused on the role of the media and politicians during the electoral period. The forum concluded with the adoption of guidelines on media coverage of the elections and declarations on freedom of political speech, on freedom of expression within the media and against hate speech. The Mission also provided four training seminars for national media and community radio stations on their role and responsibility during the electoral period in Yamoussoukro, Daloa and Abengourou.

X. Gender

52. In accordance with Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security, the Mission's gender unit continued to mainstream a gender perspective in the implementation of the mandate of UNOCI. During the reporting period, 586 Mission personnel were trained on gender mainstreaming, gender analysis and sexual and gender-based violence in post-conflict environments. As indicated above, UNOCI continued to receive reports indicating that gender-based sexual violence persists in Côte d'Ivoire; perpetrators of violations including rape, female genital mutilation and forced marriage enjoy impunity owing to the crisis and widely accepted traditional and cultural norms. As part of the national action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, with support from the Mission and the United Nations Development Programme, organized a seminar for legal and judicial personnel aimed at designing appropriate actions to combat sexual and gender-based violence.

53. Meanwhile, with support from UNOCI, the women's network Coordination des femmes pour les élections continued its activities to encourage the participation of women in the forthcoming elections, both as candidates and as voters. In a similar vein, the Ministry of Social Affairs, Women and Family supported efforts to foster

gender parity schemes within political parties, and continued to develop a road map for women's political participation that will be presented to donors.

XI. HIV/AIDS

54. UNOCI continued to mainstream HIV/AIDS awareness in the activities of the Mission. In this regard, the Mission and the United Nations Population Fund started two new projects in June focused on the prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted infections among the Ivorian armed and security forces and commercial sex workers. In addition, since my last report, UNOCI military peer educators conducted HIV/AIDS awareness training to 3,186 personnel within their respective battalions, while 144 new peer educators were trained to conduct sensitization activities. Voluntary counselling and testing services were also provided for 1,532 Mission personnel.

XII. Personnel conduct and discipline

55. On 27 May, the non-governmental organization Save the Children, UK released the report *No One to Turn To*, which focused on the underreporting of sexual exploitation and abuse of children committed by peacekeepers and humanitarian workers in peacekeeping operations, including in Côte d'Ivoire. To increase public awareness of both my zero-tolerance policy with respect to sexual exploitation and abuse, and UNOCI proactive efforts towards full compliance with this policy, my Special Representative gave a press conference on 30 May 2008, during which he underscored the need for all allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse to be brought immediately to the attention of the Mission so that full investigations could take place and those found guilty face appropriate sanctions, in accordance with the United Nations rules and regulations. Of particular concern is an allegation that a 12-year-old girl had been raped by 10 UNOCI military personnel over a year ago, which was referenced by the BBC in its coverage of the Save the Children, United Kingdom report. The United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services is conducting a preliminary investigation to assess the credibility of the allegations. The result of these initial assessments will be shared with the concerned troop-contributing country for appropriate action.

56. In my fifteenth progress report (S/2008/1), I indicated that investigations were under way by the United Nations and the concerned troop-contributing country into allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse by personnel of a UNOCI military contingent previously stationed in the Bouaké area. These investigations are nearing their conclusion, and the results will soon be made public.

57. Meanwhile, the conduct and discipline unit of the Mission is working to develop additional measures to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse, including a public awareness campaign. In that regard, the unit maintained contact with local non-governmental organizations throughout the country, to ensure that local populations are sensitized on the applicable United Nations standards of conduct. The Mission continues to ensure that all UNOCI personnel are informed about my zero-tolerance policy. To date, 6,634 UNOCI personnel, including 3,454 military, 2,481 civilian and 699 police personnel have received mandatory training on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse.

XIII. Financial implications

58. The General Assembly, by its resolution 62/254, appropriated the amount of $475.4 million for the maintenance of UNOCI for the period from 1 July 2008 to 30 June 2009. Should the Security Council decide to extend the mandate of UNOCI beyond 30 July 2008, the cost of maintaining the Operation until 30 June 2009 would be limited to the amounts approved by the General Assembly.

59. As at 31 May 2008, unpaid assessed contributions to the Special Account for UNOCI amounted to $62.8 million. The total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations at that date amounted to $1.75 billion. Reimbursement of troop and contingent-owned equipment costs has been made for the period up to 31 May 2008 and 31 March 2008, respectively.

XIV. Observations

60. I welcome the confirmation of 30 November 2008 as the date of the first round of the presidential election, and commend the Ivorian political leaders for their sustained commitment to the implementation of the Ouagadougou Agreement. In this regard, the adoption by the Government of all the decrees pertaining to the electoral process, which, inter alia, brings the electoral code in line with the Ouagadougou Agreement, is particularly encouraging. These important developments mark the beginning of the electoral process in earnest. I urge the Ivorian parties to do everything possible to keep the process on track, and call on the international community to provide the logistical, technical and financial support necessary to conduct the electoral process and other key tasks set out in the Ouagadougou Agreement, in particular the disarmament and national civic service programmes, and to build the capacity of the newly restored State institutions in the northern part of the country.

61. Notwithstanding the positive developments, Côte d'Ivoire still faces significant challenges. All of the upcoming stages of the electoral process must be conducted in a transparent and credible manner, and the parties should do everything to preserve and consolidate the positive political and security climate. I am therefore deeply concerned about the funding challenges facing the cantonment process, as well as the very low number of serviceable weapons surrendered to date by cantoned combatants. The persistent lack of progress on the disarming and dismantling of the militias is also a source of concern. The continued existence of militias, even if they remain dormant, and the lack of credibility of the cantonment of former combatants with weapons stored under secure and verifiable arrangements, could pose serious risks to the electoral process. In view of the Ivorian parties' decision to defer until after the elections the implementation of key aspects of the Ouagadougou Agreement, including the unification of the armed forces and effective disarmament, I encourage the Defence and Security Forces of Côte d'Ivoire and the Forces nouvelles to jointly develop a comprehensive plan for the security of the elections, in close consultation with the Facilitator and the impartial forces and with their technical and logistical support.

62. It is essential to ensure that demobilized combatants are constructive participants in the electoral process. In that regard, I commend the steps taken by the United Nations country team, in cooperation with the Ivorian Government, to

mobilize resources towards meeting crucial peacebuilding needs. I encourage all stakeholders to expedite the planning and implementation of projects for the reinsertion of ex-combatants, ex-militias and youth-at-risk in the months leading to elections. I also commend the launch of 100 quick-impact projects and the 1,000 microprojects initiative launched by my Special Representative to support reinsertion programmes, which will contribute to an environment conducive to elections.

63. I encourage the Government to continue consultations with key bilateral and multilateral donors, with a view to addressing the critical funding gaps facing both the identification and electoral processes. My Special Representative is available to assist the Government in this regard. In conducting the certification process, in particular the explicit certification of the voters' lists and the results of the elections, my Special Representative will continue to hold broad discussions with Ivorian stakeholders, the Facilitator and international partners. In that regard, I support the monitoring method developed by my Special Representative for conducting his certification mandate.

64. In my previous report, I recommended that the Security Council maintain the current UNOCI troop levels until after the presidential and legislative elections, in keeping with the mandate of UNOCI to contribute to a secure environment conducive to free and fair elections. With elections scheduled on 30 November, UNOCI, with the Ivorian authorities and the Licorne force, is currently assessing the security threats that might impact on the electoral process, and is moving forward on comprehensive security contingency planning. Meanwhile, the restoration of State administration throughout the country and the completion of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes, identified in my thirteenth progress report on UNOCI (S/2007/275) as the key benchmarks that should trigger the beginning of withdrawal of UNOCI, remain incomplete. I therefore recommend that the mandate of UNOCI be extended for a period of six months, until 31 January 2009, and that the current strength of UNOCI be maintained until after the completion of the presidential and legislative elections. A comprehensive assessment and further recommendations on troop levels will be submitted after the announcement of the results of the November elections.

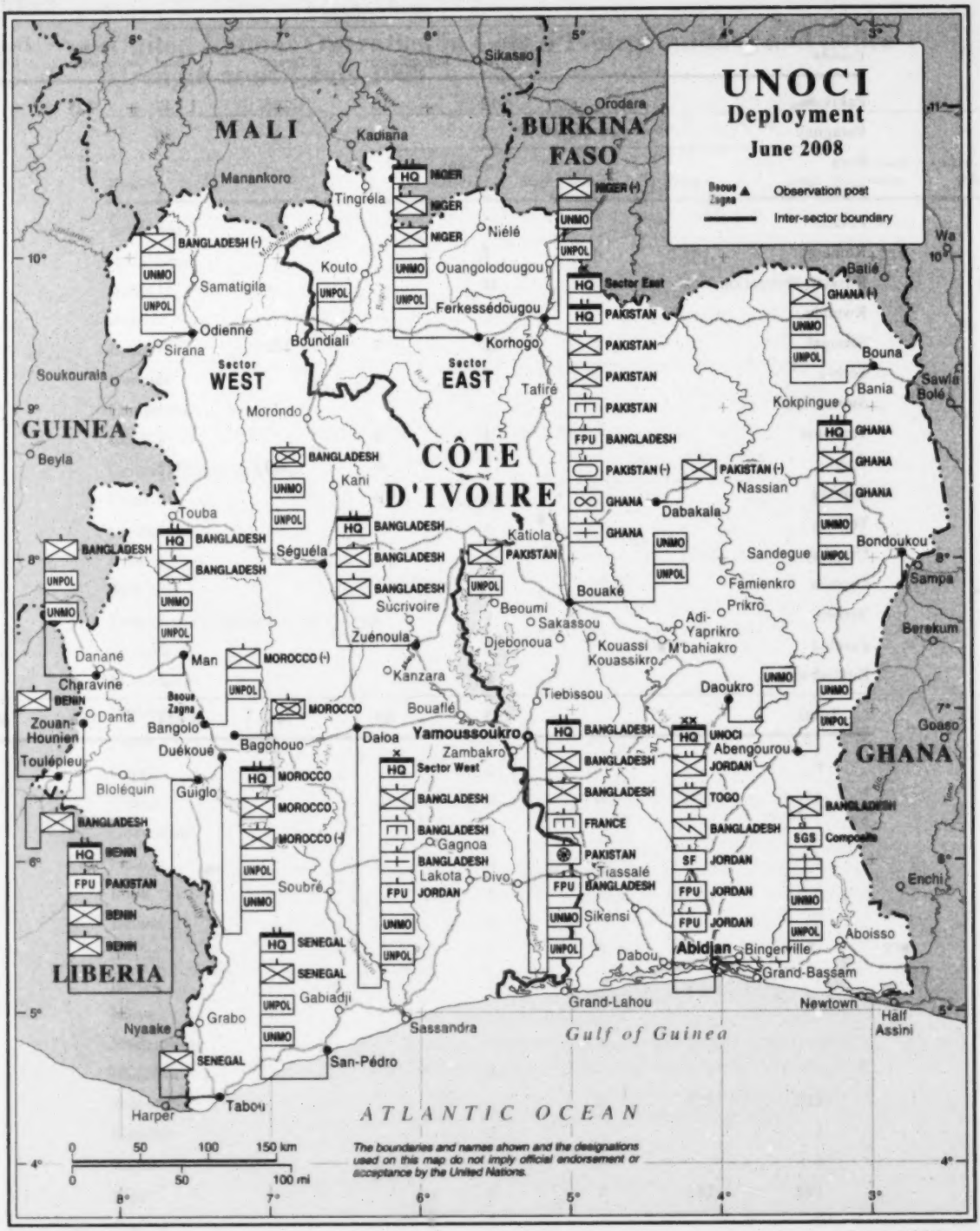
65. In conclusion, I would like to thank my Special Representative for Côte d'Ivoire, Y. J. Choi, and all UNOCI military, police and civilian personnel for their continued commitment to supporting the peace process. I also thank the Facilitator of the Ivorian peace process, President Blaise Compaoré, and his Special Representative in Côte d'Ivoire, for the essential role they have continued to play, especially in helping to resolve emerging difficulties. I thank as well all troop- and police-contributing countries, the Economic Community of West African States, the African Union, United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, humanitarian organizations, multilateral and bilateral donors, and international and local non-governmental organizations for their important contributions to achieving lasting peace in Côte d'Ivoire.

Annex

United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire: military and police strength as at 2 July 2008

	Military component					
Country	*Military observers*	*Staff officers*	*Troops*	*Total*	*Formed police units*	*Civilian police*
Argentina						
Bangladesh	11	10	2 707	2 728	250	2
Benin	8	7	420	435		52
Bolivia	3			3		
Brazil	4	3		7		
Burundi						11
Cameroon						71
Canada						7
Central African Republic						1
Chad	3			3		5
China	6			6		
Croatia	2			2		
Djibouti						52
Democratic Republic of the Congo						20
Ecuador	2			2		
El Salvador	3			3		
Ethiopia	2			2		
France	2	10	171	183		10
Gambia	3			3		
Ghana	6	6	535	547		5
Guatemala	5			5		
Guinea	3			3		
India	8			8		
Ireland	2			2		
Jordan	7	12	1 048	1 067	375	5
Kenya	1			1		
Libya						2
Madagascar						11
Moldova	3			3		
Morocco		2	723	725		
Namibia	2			2		
Nepal	3	1		4		
Niger	6	3	382	391		37
Nigeria	7			7		

Country	Military component				Formed police units	Civilian police
	Military observers	Staff officers	Troops	Total		
Pakistan	12	10	1 125	1 147	125	2
Paraguay	8	2		10		
Peru	3			3		
Philippines	4	3		7		
Poland	2			2		
Romania	7			7		
Russian Federation	11			11		
Rwanda						17
Senegal	12	7	320	339		64
Serbia	3			3		
Switzerland						2
Tanzania	1	2		3		
Togo	7	6	309	322		9
Tunisia	7	3		10		
Turkey						6
Uruguay	2			2		4
Uganda	4	1		5		
Yemen	6	1		7		7
Zambia	2			2		
Zimbabwe	2			2		
Total	**195**	**89**	**7 740**	**8 024**	**750**	**402**



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